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REMARKS

The applicants note with appreciation the acknowledgement of the claim for priority under section 119 and the notice that all of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

The applicants acknowledge and appreciate receiving an initialed copy of the form PTO-1449 that was filed on 27 August 2003.

Claims 1-4 are pending. The applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

The abstract was objected to for using legal phraseology. The abstract has been amended to remove any legal phraseology; therefore, the applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn.

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for using "deformable," which was said to be vague. The word "deformable" has been removed from the claims. Therefore, this rejection should be withdrawn.

Claims 1-4 were rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by the patent to Isomura *et al.* The applicants respectfully request that this rejection be withdrawn for the following reasons.

The office action indicates that the patent to Isomura *et al.* (the Isomura patent) discloses a steering wheel like that of the present invention. However, as detailed below, the Isomura

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patent does not disclose the switch operation portion and the deforming portions of the front cores, as claimed.

In the Isomura patent, the switch mechanisms (30) are arranged in the area of the pad (9). In other words, in the Isomura patent, the pad (9) covers upper sides of the switch mechanisms (30). In the Isomura patent, deforming portions (116, 117), which permit the ring plane (and the pad) to be displaced, are arranged in the rear spoke cores (112). See Fig. 10 of the Isomura patent. Thus, in the Isomura patent, there are no deforming portions in the front spoke cores in the manner claimed.

In the Isomura patent, when the deforming portions (116, 117) are deformed plastically, the pad (9) is displaced along with the ring plane. At this time, the switch mechanisms (30) will be displaced together with the pad (9), because the switch mechanisms (30) are arranged in the area of the pad (9). In contrast, in the present invention, the switch operation portion is separated from the pad and is arranged outward of the pad toward the ring. Therefore, when the pad is displaced, the switch operation portion cannot be displaced together with the pad.


In the present invention, the deforming portions are arranged on the front cores for displacing the switch operation portion, which is separated from the pad, along with the ring plane. Thus, not only does the Isomura patent fail to show the deforming portions in the front spoke cores, but separation of the switch operating portion from the pad is not disclosed.

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In view of the foregoing, the applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. A timely notice to that effect is respectfully requested. If questions relating to patentability remain, the examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone.

Please charge any unforeseen fees that may be due to Deposit Account No. 50-1147.

Respectfully submitted,


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